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REVIEWS OF RECENT BOOKS

The importance of Whistler in the art world of to-day, and his unique personality, make especially welcome any literature designed to set forth his art ideals or to give currency to his wit and whims. W. G. Bowdoin's "James McNeill Whistler, the Man and His Work," published by M. F. Mansfield & Co., is not only an appreciative monograph, but has the gossip flavor that makes it entertaining reading. It is simply a well-written brochure of fifty odd pages, but it gives glimpses of the eccentric artist from so many angles that the reader feels on perusing the little book that he has an intimate acquaintance with the man and his work.

Mr. Bowdoin is not chary of praise where praise is due, nor is he sparing of criticism when he thinks strictures are called for. He has a high regard for Whistler as a painter, but thinks the artist's fame will ultimately rest on his work as an etcher. In his opinion, Whistler has exercised an influence on contemporary art which it might be difficult to estimate, since, to say nothing of the artist's own pupils, many a man has given unmistakable evidences of having followed paths in the maze which he first blazed. The little book is thus not less the kindly tribute of an admirer than a frank statement of shortcomings and limitations.

"Sir David Wilkie," by Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, lately published by the Macmillan Company, is a welcome and valuable addition to the Great Masters in Painting and Sculpture Series. Wilkie holds a unique place among British painters, since he is for Scottish art what Burns and Scott are for Scottish poetry and romance.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century Scotland cannot be said to have produced any artist of original talent to compare with those of England. In the eighteenth century, indeed, there were a number of good portrait-painters, among whom Allan Ramsay was pre-eminent. Toward the close of the century Alexander Nasmyth and his son, Patrick, appeared as the forerunners of the landscapists. But *genre* painting, the story-telling picture, was practically a thing unknown in Scotland until 1805, when Wilkie appeared.

His career, which was cut short by his untimely death in 1841, was one marked by notable successes and honors. This career Lord Gower traces carefully and in a most interesting way from the artist's earliest years of effort, giving in detail his life in Edinburgh and London, and his subsequent travels in Switzerland, Italy, and Spain, through which he journeyed in search of health. Separate chapters are devoted to the artist's early works, to his chief pictures, and to his Scottish honors, as well as to his latest works and etchings.

The reader is thus enabled to follow the development of the painter's art, and is given a comprehensive and sympathetic appreciation of the works produced. The volume, in point of style, is eminently readable, and in point of fact, is reliable and sufficing.

Many studies or so-called biographies of Ruskin have been published, but none has been more satisfactory, alike to the student and the general reader, than "The Life and Work of John Ruskin," by W. G. Collingwood, first published in two volumes, in 1893, by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., and later issued in condensed and rewritten form by the same house. This condensed biography, which has recently gone to its second edition, is in many senses a more valuable handbook than the original work.

The reissues of Ruskin's writings in cheaper editions have made his many volumes more accessible to the public, and have made more popular his teachings. The average art student, therefore, does not need the lengthy abstracts of Ruskin's books with which the work here under notice was formerly loaded. Expositions of the great critic's teachings, which were once so acceptable, would now be little less than an affront to the reader, and an annoying interruption to the biographical narrative.

Mr. Collingwood has wisely eliminated the expository portions in his revised work, thus making it less a text-book and more a valuable contribution to biographical literature. On the other hand, he has been able to add much new biographical detail from various sources, especially from the old papers and journals at Brantwood. Even now the work is bulky, but it is so pleasant in its style, and so sympathetic in its treatment, that those interested in Ruskin and his work will find it almost an ideal volume.

"Sketches of Great Painters," by Colonna Murray Dallin, published by Silver, Burdett & Company, is another of the instructive handbooks called forth by the growing interest of the masses in art matters. The primary object of the book is to interest young people in the lives and works of some of the masters of painting, and secondly, to aid them in making collections of art photographs.

The author treats of twenty-one of the masters, from Giotto to Turner. The sketches are in no sense biographies or criticisms, but are entertaining stories, rich in anecdote, and designed to stimulate an interest in the minds of the readers to continue the study of the artists in greater detail. The book may be heartily recommended for the purpose for which it was written. It is profusely illustrated, and contains a carefully prepared pronouncing vocabulary of proper names, and lists of important paintings which the reader may secure in photographic form for the purpose of study.